



Joint Field Office
75 N. Fair Oaks Ave., 3rd Floor
Pasadena, CA 91103

FEMA

Recovery News

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HOUSING FOUND FOR DISPLACED WILDFIRE VICTIMS

PASADENA, Calif. — When the recent wildfires whipped through Southern California, they leveled more than buildings. For more than 2,000 families, the flames destroyed their security – their homes.

“We understand how devastating fires can be,” said Federal Coordinating Officer Mike Hall of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). “Our goal is to make sure that everyone displaced by the fires has a safe and secure place to live.”

Of the 18,123 people who have registered for aid, most had insurance coverage which gave them funds for finding alternative housing arrangements. About 8 percent (1,510) needed some form of FEMA housing assistance. FEMA housing specialists work with each individual and family to find the best solutions available.

More than 90 percent of the applicants who needed help with housing (about 1,400) have found suitable temporary housing. Typically that means living in rental property. Many applicants located housing on their own, but FEMA and the state helped when needed.

While victims are putting their lives back together, FEMA may pay rental costs not covered by insurance for up to 18 months. If insurance money is delayed, FEMA will advance the money, which must be repaid after the insurance settlement is received. FEMA has approved \$2.8 million to pay for rental assistance.

More than \$7.5 million has been given to disaster victims for housing assistance. The largest portion, \$4.7 million, is going to 176 applicants whose homes were completely destroyed. Another \$475, 000 has been earmarked for 16 applicants to make repairs to their property.

A disaster victim may receive up to \$28,800, the maximum grant available through FEMA. The state has a supplemental grant program with individual awards up to \$10,000. To date, the state has approved \$1.3 million in supplemental grants to help cover disaster-related funeral, medical, dental and transportation costs.

Homeowners, renters and businesses can apply for a low-interest loan from the Small Business Administration (SBA). The SBA is the federal government’s primary funding source for the long-term rebuilding and repair of disaster-damaged private property. To date, SBA has approved \$43.3 million in 356 loans to homeowners and businesses.

FEMA works closely with individuals to identify the type and location of housing that would be most appropriate.

Whether funding repairs to an existing home, providing money to rent a house or apartment, or funding a transitional home, FEMA makes every effort to find a housing solution that meets the individual's needs.

FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror.

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) coordinates overall state-agency response to major disasters in support of local government. OES is also responsible for maintaining the State Emergency Plan and coordinating California's preparedness, mitigation and recovery efforts.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, you should call FEMA toll-free at 1-800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 1-800-462-7585.

SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged private property. SBA helps homeowners, renters, businesses of all sizes, and private non-profit organizations fund repairs or rebuilding efforts, and cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged personal property. These disaster loans cover uninsured and uncompensated losses and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations. For information about SBA programs, applicants may call 800-659-2955.

Temporary housing assistance from FEMA does not require that an applicant file for an SBA loan. However, an applicant must complete an SBA loan application to be eligible for additional assistance under the part of the Other Needs Assistance (ONA) program that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses. There are other ONA grants such as public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses that do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan to be eligible. FEMA will process applications for housing assistance regardless of whether the applicant has applied for an SBA loan, and eligibility determinations for applicants requesting FEMA's temporary housing assistance will not be held up because the applicant has or has not filled out an SBA application.

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